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ABSTRACT

The Wyoming Postsecondary Education Options Program (WPEOP) outlines conditions under which Wyoming high school students can take college-level courses and earn concurrent high school academic credit. Implemented in 1995, the program provides an opportunity for high school students to earn college credit while still in high school. All seven local community colleges offer a selection of WPEOP courses, and both the University of Wyoming and these community colleges accept WPEOP coursework. WPEOP coursework is delivered in one of the following ways: high school students attend classes taught by college faculty and held at college or high school campuses, high school students attend classes at high school campuses, taught by qualified high school faculty, or high school students attend televised courses taught by college faculty at high school campuses. Individuals knowledgeable about WPEOP policies at the colleges were interviewed personally or by phone and a questionnaire was mailed to Wyoming's 48 school districts. Fifty-four percent (26) of the school districts responded. Statistics are not given for the personal interviews. Nine of the 26 school districts reported that they had grade point average requirements for participation. The school districts reported a total of 3,860 students had received WPEOP credits. (Contains 10 references.) (NB)

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ED 469 359

WPEOP Report

WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMISSION

September14, 1998

Wyoming Postsecondary Education Options Program Study

Domain 2 Study[1]

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I. Introduction:

Purpose of the study

In the summer of 1997 the Wyoming Community College Commission undertook an initial study to investigate student utilization and funding of WPEOP throughout the Community College System. As often happens in social science research, the data gathered dictated a more comprehensive look at WPEOP for a clearer understanding of concurrent enrollment programs statewide.

The study was expanded to include interviews with college personnel and survey questionnaires sent to the 48 Wyoming school districts. The design of the study was descriptive. The purpose was (1) to advance an understanding of the postsecondary options program, and, (2) to provide the University of Wyoming with requested information on the expected number of incoming Wyoming high school graduates having completed requisite freshmen coursework through WPEOP. Results of the previous study were published in the October 20, 1997

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"Report to the Joint Education Committee Wyoming Legislature" (pages 11-12).

What is concurrent/dual enrollment in Wyoming?

The Wyoming Postsecondary Education Options Program (WPEOP) outlines conditions under which Wyoming High School students can take college-level courses and earn concurrent college and high school academic credit (Wyoming Education Code, Chapter 20: Article 2) (appendix A of this report). Implemented in 1995, the program provides an opportunity for high school students to earn college credit while still in high school (HS), often without leaving their high school campuses. All seven community colleges offer a selection of WPEOP courses. The University of Wyoming has stated that although WPEOP courses have not been offered directly by the University, negotiations with respect to offering courses have taken place with Laramie High School. Both the community colleges and the University of Wyoming accept WPEOP coursework (academic transfer courses) when successfully completed.

WPEOP coursework is delivered as follows:

· HS students attend classes at college campuses taught by college faculty.

· HS students attend classes at HS campuses taught by college faculty.

· HS students attend classes at HS campuses taught by qualified HS faculty (HS instructors must qualify as college adjunct faculty and use college syllabi and textbooks for WPEOP courses).

· HS students attend televised courses taught by college faculty at HS campuses. At the time of the study, only one college utilized strictly college faculty in the delivery of WPEOP coursework (using qualified HS faculty was under consideration at this college). Wyoming Education Code, Chapter 20: Article 2 makes no reference to qualifying standards of WPEOP instructors and such qualitative issues are beyond the scope of this report.

II. Dual/Concurrent Enrollment—An Overview

". . . [I]n today's educational environment high schools and their students will aggressively pursue avenues to obtain college credit. It is our responsibility to respond to this reality by creating dual credit programs which offer students quality college-level instruction and which unite teachers at both levels in a mutually beneficial professional undertaking" (Michael Vivion, WPA:-Writing-Program-Administration; v15 n1-2 p55-60 Fall-Win 1991).

Key Issues

The above quote captures a dominant theme recurring throughout the literature on dual/concurrent enrollment programs. Addressing English dual enrollment programs offered through several high schools and a Midwestern university, the author stated, ". . . these types of programs are perceived as essential opportunities for the districts' students, opportunities which parents both expect and demand." Most of the findings in the literature review support the notion that dual enrollment programs will experience continued growth. Because of this expected growth, colleges, high schools, and state agencies are compelled to research various elements of dual enrollment programs:

- Student eligibility
- Program completer outcomes
- Academic quality
- Grading standards
- Faculty credentials
- Financial and logistic impact on high schools and colleges
- Compliance with statutorily defined standards
- Funding

Many of the individual colleges and college systems require that high school juniors and seniors have better than average grade point averages to be eligible

for dual enrollment programs. Recommendations of high school principles are also a common requirement, as are diagnostic placement tests, and course prerequisites.

Follow-up on program completers is being conducted in many systems. Writing of concerns of the public, the legislature, and four-year institutions, a research report by the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) stated:

> There are doubts and concerns about what the public school and community college partnerships are accomplishing with their dual credit instruction. The individual colleges and the System need to collect and analyze student performance data, by courses and disciplines. . . . The public, therefore, should be informed about procedures (1) to determine which students are eligible for admission to dual credit courses, (2) to measure student achievement and verify that they have acquired knowledge and skills commensurate with college level instruction, and (3) to assess dual credit students' subsequent academic achievement in non-dual-credit courses taken at the community colleges or the universities.
> Until we are able to report on whether or not students who have taken dual credit instruction are as adequately prepared to do college level work as those who never took the dual credit courses, the concerns about the effectiveness and quality of dual enrollment instruction will remain (Virginia Community College System Study of the Colleges' Operation of Dual Credit Agreements with Public High Schools, May 18 to September 8, 1992, p.5) [bold type in original].

The Virginia study found that 7 of the 17 community colleges in the state system conducted dual enrollment assessment and concluded that "Each community college, without exception, should have a strategy for assessing student learning outcomes in dual credit courses" (VCCS Study, p.9).

Just such student outcomes assessment was undertaken by Patricia Windham, Ph.D., Director of Educational Effectiveness and Research for the Florida State Board of Community Colleges (What Happens to Community College Dual Enrollment Students, 1996). Twenty-eight community colleges in the public community college system enrolled 23,343 dual enrollment students in 1994-95

who earned 62,745 hours of credit. The study followed students from Pensacola Junior College (PJC) and Tallahassee Community College (TCC) to the University of West Florida and Florida State University. PJC limited their sample to students taking dual credit English 1101 and/or 1102 while TCC used all students enrolled in dual credit courses.

Windham found that the mean GPA of former dual enrollment students was slightly higher than the mean GPA of native students at both universities. She also found that, "none of the former dual enrollees made below a C in any FSU English or literature course" (Windham, p.5). Additionally, former dual enrollment students did better in subsequent sequence courses offered at the university than did regular university students.

Windham noted that the higher grade distribution of former dual students would be expected since HS dual enrollment students had to pass a college placement test and be recommended by the high school principal before registering (also indicating that this group of students, for the most part, were more highly motivated and academically skilled than the average student). One of the Windham study weaknesses was comparing the brightest students in high school to the wide-ranging academic variation found in the entire university student population.

The University of Missouri-Kansas City's High School/College Credit Program follow-up studies on their dual enrollment English students revealed that students "generally perform as well or better in their following composition courses" at the university (Vivion, p.59). No methodology or statistical analyses were offered.

The academic quality of dual enrollment programs is closely linked to the issue of student outcome assessment because, in part, what is being measured in outcome assessment is, the quality of instruction offered. A strong opponent of dual enrollment programs in English, David Schwalm wrote "In many dual enrollment programs, a student who has paid tuition need only pass senior [HS] English to be assured of college credit" (David Schwalm, *WPA:-Writing-Program-Administration;* v15 n1-2 p55-60 Fall-Win 1991*).* Schwalm believed that "the rapid spread of dual enrollment programs are, on the one hand, economic incentives (get rid of "expensive" college composition programs by giving everyone credit in high school and get tuition too) and, on the other, students and parents who naively buy into the equation of credit hours with knowledge. It is extraordinarily difficult to resist a practice that is both economically advantageous and supported by its

victims" (Schwalm, p.53-54).

Vivion reported that once the English faculty at his university "decided to accept the reality" of offering college credit on the high school campus, steps were taken to recreate the program that proved very successful:

> The program that evolved includes the following elements: direct supervision of participating teachers, departmental approval of participating faculty, opportunities for professional development, collaboration between on-campus and high school faculty. This redesigned program has significantly changed relationships between the English Department and local school teachers. . . . Because the [HS] teachers feel connected with the department, they feel freer to collaborate with the department. . . . In short, these teachers have become valuable colleagues whose voices are now part of the professional conversation of our English department. . . . We have joined with our school colleagues to create a school/college collaboration which has significantly improved the quality of writing instruction at both the high school and the university (Vivion, p.57-59).

While Vivion had high praise for his English Department's commitment to participation in the establishment of a dual enrollment program, he stated that the department would prefer to have students on the university campus and this preference is the reason that his university does not offer the second course in English composition at the high school campuses. Interaction with students of different ages from different locales and the benefit of the unique cultural circumstances of a college campus are discussed in the literature as reasons for preferring students get college credit on the college campus.

Schwalm makes an argument along these same lines:

> They must learn to address college audiences, to write about complex and abstract subjects, to draw on the research resources that college writing tasks require, to use college-level reading and discussions as a basis for writing. College writing courses are, by definition, taught in the general context of college—a context

impossible to replicate in a high school senior English class (Schwalm, p53).

In summation, the literature identifies many problems while proposing somewhat fewer solutions regarding the simultaneous delivery of high school and college credit. But the literature is concordant on one theme: dual enrollment is popular with students and parents and is growing rapidly because of financial incentives to both the providers and receivers of dual credit. Sometimes only implied and other times clearly stated in the literature is the assumption that "If a college or university fails to offer dual credit to high schools within their area (for whatever reason) the high schools will find someone else who will."

II. Methodology

Individuals knowledgeable about WPEOP policies at the colleges were interviewed personally or by phone (at all but one college, academic deans). Interviews lasted from 10 to 20 minutes and often required follow-up questions submitted by email. Documents such as WPEOP written agreements between the colleges and the school districts were requested along with any other documents addressing rules under which WPEOP operates. Additionally, a two-page questionnaire (appendix B) was mailed to Wyoming's 48 school districts through the office of the Wyoming Department of Education's (WDE) Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction.

After completing interviews with college personnel, a short report compiling information from both the interviews and relevant documentation was sent back to the participants via email. Participants were asked to review the reports and respond to items they felt were inaccurate and/or to submit additional information they felt necessary for clarification. Five colleges responded and their responses are reflected in this final report.

The school district survey questionnaire consisted of 8 open-ended questions and requested that districts provide anonymous student data listing the number and title of the courses taken through WPEOP for all students graduating from HS in May 1998. Twenty-six of Wyoming's forty-eight school districts responded (54% response). Although the information submitted by some of the school districts was detailed and appeared comprehensive, some respondents provided less

information.

III. Student Eligibility

Wyoming Education Code states that student eligibility requirements for WPEOP participation shall be based on criteria established by the colleges. Eligibility requirements for WPEOP students varied among the 7 colleges. Criteria used by the colleges included: COMPASS or ASSET exam scores, ACT or SAT scores, high school GPA, high school transcript, completion of prerequisite courses, grade level, age, and recommendation/permission of high school instructors, counselors, and principals (appendix B).

Most Wyoming community colleges required students be seniors and/or juniors in high school in order to qualify for WPEOP courses. One college had no grade level requirement, but required that students be 16 years of age. Another college required students be age16, but recommended that students also be seniors. One tied grade level requirements to GPA: juniors and seniors were eligible with a 2.7 GPA and students below the junior level were eligible with a GPA of 3.5. All of the colleges expressed a willingness to review student circumstances and past performance on a case-by-case basis and make determinations accordingly. Some colleges asked for high school instructors', student counselors', and/or principals' permission or recommendation to qualify for WPEOP.

COMPASS or ASSET placement exams were used at all of the colleges to determine if students possess literacy and math skills necessary to accomplish college-level coursework. Colleges also accepted ACT or SAT scores as evidence of college-level skills. Student transcripts from participating high schools were also requested at some of the colleges.

Variations in individual college requirements regarding student eligibility existed among the colleges of the system, but overall, common requirements exceeded deviations. COMPASS or ASSET exams were used throughout the system as an indicator of students' ability to handle college-level coursework while junior or senior status was the norm for grade level. A minority of colleges used high school GPA requirements or recommended minimum grade point averages.

Eligibility requirements at the school districts varied considerably more than at the colleges. Nine of the twenty-six districts reported GPA requirements: 2.0, 2.7, 3.0, 3.25, or B+. Eleven reported that students are required to take a pretest, COMPASS, ASSET, ACT, or SAT. Five districts reported that recommendation and/or permission of HS teachers, counselors, or principals were the only eligibility requirements. In some districts having more than one high school, eligibility requirements varied by individual high school. Some districts had combinations of GPA, pretest, and staff recommendations. Three reported that the eligibility requirements of the colleges in their districts set the standards.

IV. Course Structure

Use of the term "course structure" in this report refers only to the formal guidelines established by the colleges and school districts regarding delivery of WPEOP coursework. This study made no attempt to measure qualitative aspects of WPEOP delivery in Wyoming. Teacher quality, course rigor, and academic achievement of students were beyond this project's scope. Rather, this study documents guidelines the 7 colleges have implemented in an attempt to ensure course quality.

All colleges but one used HS faculty in the delivery of WPEOP courses. HS faculty were normally approved using the same standards as all adjunct college faculty. One college specifies in "Concurrent Enrollment Procedures," conditions whereby HS faculty may be approved if they do not meet standard adjunct faculty qualifications:

> These conditions may include enrollment in an appropriate graduate class, agreement to team-teach with approved instructor, agreement to teach the course using programmed or prepared materials, or agreement to on-campus peer faculty's review of tests, essays, or other assignments that assess the attainment of course objectives.

Another college stated in their concurrent enrollment agreement that "faculty from the appropriate participating discipline areas will meet on a yearly basis to review

and mutually agree upon course content, objectives, outcomes, and outcome assessments in order to meet or exceed those established at . . . [this college]. "Outcome assessment" here refers to an assessment test administered at the end of both regular class sections and WPEOP class sections throughout the college district. Scores of WPEOP and regular college students are compared for competency level.

Colleges normally required that HS faculty use the same syllabi and textbooks as the college courses of the same name and number taught on the college campuses. Exceptions were granted at some schools when college and high school faculty met and agreed on changes in curricula, syllabi, or textbooks.

V. Funding of WPEOP

The funding mechanism outlined in Wyoming statue states:

> *The school district and the university or community college district entering into an agreement for purposes of this section shall, if there are any fees within the agreement, establish fees to be assessed the school district for student participation under the program, the payment schedule for the established fees and other necessary arrangements to facilitate fee payment and collection. Any textbooks, materials or equipment purchased under the established fees shall be addressed within the agreement entered into between the university or college and the school district. The university or community college shall not directly assess and collect any fee from the participating student for textbooks, materials, student services or any other fees otherwise assessed and collected from students attending the institution* (Wyoming Education Code, Chapter 20: Article 2).

Four entities were involved in funding WPEOP: colleges, school districts, Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), and students themselves. Colleges sometimes received payment from school districts for tuition and/or fees. Two colleges reported directly receiving BOCES funds. In one district BOCES paid 100 percent of concurrent enrollment books and tuition for students' first courses. In another, BOCES money covered student fees ($16.50 per credit hour). The remaining five colleges reported no direct receipt of BOCES funds.

At five of the colleges, there were reimbursement arrangements between school districts and colleges covering tuition, facility use, instructors' salaries, textbooks,

and/or classroom supplies. The most frequently used reimbursement arrangement consisted of colleges billing school districts for tuition and/or fees at the standard rate, and the school districts subsequently billing the colleges for faculty salary and/or facility use. This occurred where WPEOP courses were taught at school district sites by school district faculty (the most frequently used delivery method).

Several variations on this arrangement existed at individual colleges:

· One college fully covered student tuition and fees while the school district covered costs for faculty salary, facilities, textbooks, and supplies; this agreement produced essentially the same results as the arrangement above, but the reimbursement procedure was bypassed.

· Generally, school districts were responsible for transportation, textbooks, and/or classroom materials.

· One college reimbursed school district faculty based on the college's faculty pay schedule.

· One college paid a set rate of $1,200 to the school district for each 3 hour WPEOP course taught at a school district site and also directly paid $200 to teachers to cover paperwork (a usual minimum of 10 students per class was required for the class to be offered).

WPEOP funding appears to be shared predominantly by colleges and school districts (of course, both include WPEOP students in their FTE counts for which they receive formula funding). Local BOCES are major contributors in funding WPEOP in some college districts, and apparently play little or no financial role in others.

Of the school districts, 17 reported that BOCES played no role in funding at their end, while 8 reported having received funds from BOCES. Seventeen districts (65% of those reporting) said that students were required to pay at least some, and sometimes all, of the tuition for WPEOP courses. Five districts reported some type of scholarship funds available to help students finance WPEOP courses. Seventy-seven percent of the reporting districts (20 districts) reported that district budget funds were used in the funding WPEOP.

VI. Student Utilization

School districts were asked to report the number of students who had utilized

WPEOP since its inception in 1995. The district responses ranged from 0 to 550 students. In sum, the 26 reporting districts (out of 48) responded that approximately 3,860 students had received WPEOP credits in their districts (see Table 1, page 12).[2]

The variety of courses offered was substantial: 117 courses ranging from Accounting to Russian, to Beginning Guitar, to Engineering Computing (Table 2, page 13).

Students scheduled to graduate from HS in Spring 1998 and who utilized WPEOP coursework made use of the program in varying degrees. While some students used the program sparingly (1 or 2 courses) others completed their college-level freshman English, History, Math, and Political Science requirements, and beyond. It was not unusual to find students with 12 to 15 hours of college credit completed by the time they graduated from high school. Overall, the program was used by a large number of students for a variety of purposes; some used the program to fulfill required college courses while others used it to explore music and theater.

VII. Implications

1. The degree to which student outcome assessment is being conducted by the colleges was not part of this study. The literature review (and known "best practice") suggests that such assessment is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of dual enrollment programs. Follow-up studies on the ability of dual enrollment students to perform adequately in subsequent college coursework is fundamental to assessing program effectiveness and academic quality.

2. The degree to which HS teachers (often adjunct college faculty) are supervised by college faculty in the delivery of dual enrollment was not part of this study. The literature indicates that close college faculty and HS faculty collaboration in the delivery of dual enrollment coursework may serve to significantly improve the quality of instruction at both the high schools and the colleges.

3. Student eligibility requirements were part of this study. If equality in student opportunities for dual credit is a goal in Wyoming's delivery of education,

adjustments may be necessary to student eligibility requirements at both the school districts and colleges in order to meet that goal. Discussions among deliverers of secondary and postsecondary education are suggested to (1) determine if statewide consistency in eligibility requirements is indeed a goal and, (2) determine how the system might go about adjusting the requirements to achieve consistency.

4. Student utilization of dual enrollment was part of this study. This study failed to document an accurate census of utilization rates because of low response rates from the school districts. The rate at which the program is growing statewide will have fiscal, academic, and staffing implications for school districts, colleges, and the University. An accurate census may be necessary to plan effective program delivery.

5. Funding of WPEOP was part of this study. In some districts, student are offered dual enrollment opportunities with little or no out-of-pocket costs. In others, students pay a major share of the cost of dual enrollment courses. If equality in funding for dual credit is a goal in Wyoming's delivery of education, adjustments are necessary to funding at both the school districts and colleges in order to meet such a goal. Discussions among deliverers of secondary and postsecondary education are suggested to (1) determine if statewide consistency in funding is indeed a goal and, (2) determine how the system might go about achieving consistency.

A comprehensive and focused analysis of dual/concurrent enrollment programs in Wyoming is suggested by this study. The areas of analyses should include, but not be limited to:

- Student eligibility
- Program completer outcomes
- Academic quality
- Grading standards
- Faculty credentials
- Financial and logistic impact on high schools and colleges

- Compliance with statutorily defined standards
- Funding

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[1] Domain 2 studies are defined in the Wyoming Community College System Strategic Plan 1998-2002 as "studies of the system deal[ing] with subjects within the purview of local college governing boards and are within the statutory responsibility of the Commission, but which are of interest to the legislature, the Office of the Governor, the Commission, and local boards and may result in recommendations to local college governing boards" (page 5).

[2] Several districts reported that the numbers they were providing were approximations. Natrona County submitted a hard copy list of 5 semesters of WPEOP students that include duplicated counts of students. A rough estimate was compiled from that list.

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